

Shall Mammon Prevail?

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THE Holy Year, commemorating the nineteen hundredth anniversary of the Act of Redemption, has come and gone. It was fraught with momentous events in the spiritual order: many beatifications and canonizations, a constant stream of pilgrims to the center of Christendom, a great outpouring of praise and supplication to God, a series of important utterances from the Head of the Teaching Church. But the world has seemingly been unaffected by all this religious activity: it shows no signs of "conversion": the war-menace is more portentous than ever; the nations are increasingly under the sway of racial mistrust and fear in their relations: civil liberties are more and more abridged by State encroachments, whilst there is no lessening in the display of moral corruption in literature, the theater and the Press: finally, the abuses of Capitalism remain unremedied, the maldistribution of wealth is even growing, and the mismanagement of industry, which multiplies production whilst diminishing consumption, was never more manifest. All these evils spring from moral causes, but all that the world can do is to tinker with material remedies. The government of the world is, for the most part, in the hands of those who do not know the real object of life, who are not themselves seeking the Kingdom of God first of all, and, therefore, cannot guide others aright, who have closed their eyes to the Light of the World, and so are blindly leading the blind into the inevitable ditch. Even the high-hearted and optimistic Vicar of Christ has ceased, for the time, to warn the heedless world. In the words of a shrewd observer in the *Clergy Review*—"The Pope will not speak because the world will not listen."

Such being the case, no excuse is needed for returning to a subject already dealt with in the *Month* for January, where the causes of world-chaos were traced to the world's abandonment of the Christian moral principles which originally civilized it, and to its endeavor to save itself without

recourse to its Saviour. How can that process be reversed? More than once in history has the Catholic Church, which that Saviour founded and equipped for the work, pulled the world back from the abyss towards which it was hastening. That, indeed, is her God-given *raison d'être*: to illumine and to preserve what is of itself unguided and corruptible, to reform society by reforming its individual members, to witness always to that enduring after-world for which this is only the preparation. And this she accomplishes normally by means of her human constituents. If the Body through which the spirit of Christ operates is itself maimed or sickly or apathetic, His work will be correspondingly hampered. The Church is a moral power, guiding and inspiring the wills of men through faith in unseen realities. Hence, if the world perishes, the only reason will be that Christian faith has perished, and faith dies if it is not active. Faith, indeed, without works is dead.

In every age the sight of "prosperity of the wicked," the seeming ability of man to do without God, the prevalent boast—"I have sinned and what evil hath befallen me?," have prompted the Christian onlooker to apprehend the final dissolution of all things. Recovery seems impossible without that faith which gives the will motives for exertion. It is encouraging to reflect that Christianity—the Barque of Peter, if you will—has in the past met and overcome far worse storms than we are experiencing today. The Church was born into conflict so terrible that her survival has been as miraculous as her Lord's Resurrection. Even St. Paul—and who more conscious than he of her tremendous supernatural strength?—seems to have doubted at times whether even the redeemed world could in his lifetime escape the disintegration due to its corruption. And other Christian Fathers, both before and after the breakdown of the Roman Empire, have thought, with Our Lord's apocalyptic warnings in mind, to detect in their surroundings the signs foretelling the doom of contemporary civilization. St. Cyprian, for instance, in the third century, is quite positive on the subject—

The world itself now bears witness to its approaching end by the evidence of its failing prowess. . . . The peasant is disappearing from the fields, the sailor at sea, the soldiers in the camp, uprightness in the forum, justice in the court, concord in friendships, skill in the arts, discipline in morals.

Similar prognostics have marked each recurring crisis in history, but they are never justified: "concerning that day or hour no man knoweth." We are not given the means of judging, for, apart from defects in our own observation, there are vast forces hidden from our sight. God's ways are not our ways, and who hath known the mind of the Lord? His cause has often seemed hopeless in the past—when, for instance, heresies like Arianism were widespread, when the conquering Moslem overran the Balkans and Spain, when Luther's revolt shattered Christendom, when the French Revolution tried to dethrone God, when Napoleon laid hands on the Vicar of Christ—and yet, in the end, has triumphantly reasserted itself. These facts should convince us that all that we can prudently diagnose from the appearance of a general rejection of the supernatural, the only principle of permanence in civilization, is that Christian culture is undergoing one of its periodic ebbings: the tide may turn: it is perhaps the end of one epoch, the beginning of another. After all, at the best of times, the gap between the ideal civilization, wholly achieving the purpose of its Creator, and the actual measure of success that His Church has ever won, is always so immense that, although reasons for sorrow are always present, there are never reasons for despair. A hundred years ago, Frederic Ozanam, then eighteen, was writing to a friend—

Like you I feel that the past is crumbling, that the foundations of the old building are wrecked, and that an appalling shock has altered the face of the earth. But what will rise out of the ruins? Will society remain buried under the rubbish of overthrown power, or will she reappear, more brilliant, more youthful, more beautiful? . . . I who believe in Providence, believe in a sort of palingenesis.

So the phenomenon is recurrent. It may be that we are now in the trough of the wave, or we may have to sink still lower. We cannot tell. But what we Catholics do know is that we ourselves are largely responsible for the decay of Christian civilization. We have not been faith-full. The charge committed to us of trading with our supernatural talents has never been adequately fulfilled. That is why in calling us to serve civilization at this crisis, the Pope insists that the first step in Catholic Action is personal reformation, the revival of faith in our own microcosm as a prelude to re-

kindling it in the world without. Our Lord in His parable allows for differences of productivity in the wheat He has sown, but He makes no mention of the sort which produces nothing. There is little difference between that and the interspersed cockle. It is a rather terrifying thought, expressed in another saying of His, that those who are not for Him—having knowledge and opportunity—are against Him, are, in so many words, Antichrists. Yet there is no escaping that conclusion. We have not to wait for the imminent dissolution of the world to encounter that portentous Man of Sin. "Ye have heard that Antichrist is coming," says St. John (I John ii, 18), "even now there are many Antichrists." He existed, in fact, before Christ's religion was established. He made his appearance amongst the original Twelve. He ruled over the Synagogue when the Church was born in the Cenacle. He headed all the multitudinous early heresies which opposed the pure and strict teaching of the Gospel. And today he is not confined to Russia, or to the sorry cliques of atheists and agnostics that attack religion in every land—formal enemies of the Cross of Christ—but he flourishes in the Church herself, amongst those multitudes of unworthy, half-hearted Catholics who have "conformed to this world" and are not only lethargic in God's service, but to that extent oppose Him. "He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."

God has made Catholics, by calling them to the Faith, keepers of their brethren. What a hopelessly inadequate view of our unique privilege it is to forget that it carries with it a unique duty besides! The familiar and useful distinction between the Church Teaching and the Church Learning, while making for discipline and order, has had the indirect effect of suggesting to the latter that they have no share in the active apostolate, so that the idea of universal Catholic Action which the Pope incessantly preaches, is still unfamiliar to many. They rather hide their faith than rejoice in occasions to display it. Forgetting the injunction to let their light shine before men, they turn it as low as they can without actually extinguishing it. Accustomed to be taught by the clergy, they won't teach themselves, by constantly adding to their knowledge of the implications of their Faith: still less do they think of teaching others. As Cardinal Verdier, of Paris, wrote lately on this very subject—

Formerly, the teaching Church and the Church taught were perhaps too much separated one from the other. Priests alone dispensed the aids of religion, and the faithful simply received them. It must be admitted that this too passive attitude on the part of the laity has had its inconveniences. Man holds more firmly to what he has acquired by personal effort, for then only does he appreciate the value of his treasure. Moreover, this too sharp separation was apt to create in the Church, as it were, two different mentalities. Henceforward, participating in the same work, sharing in the same Apostolic life, the clergy and the faithful, as in the days of the Apostles, will more easily have "but one heart and one soul."

What the Pope, and other Catholic leaders, have in mind in their endeavor to bring home to the faithful not merely the advantage, but also the *duty*, of cooperating with the clergy in trying to save Christian civilization, is more immediately concerned with reuniting ethics and economics, than with direct propagation of the Catholic Faith. The fight is substantially on the plane of natural justice, enforced as it is by Christian charity, and its objective is to bring all financial and industrial relations under the control of the moral law. For, if one phenomenon more than another emerges conspicuous from the world-chaos, it is that the chief cause of it is the Capitalistic system, operating without any conscientious reference to human or divine rights, and under the sole unregulated urge of the profit-motive. It is that which has created the problem of the maldistribution of wealth, stated in Cardinal Bourne's famous Lenten Pastoral of 1918 as—"to find a way of distributing surplus wealth so that the poor man, manual worker or inferior clerk, may have the additional remuneration that he so urgently needs: and the rich man no longer receive the heaped-up increment which he in no sense requires and cannot efficiently control." Under the old industrial system wherein everything is sacrificed to the making of as large profits as possible, and hence costs of production are lowered by every means—mergers, machinery, wage-cuts—money tends to gather into fewer hands and consumers lose purchasing power. As a result, we are told that, whereas in 1920 60 per cent of the wealth of the United States was owned by 15 per cent of the population, in 1930 more than 80 per cent of that wealth was owned by about 5 per cent of the population—a process which continues apace. If, on the other hand, American millionaires have decreased in number from 513 in 1929

(the year of the boom) to twenty in 1932, that only means that much of their wealth was merely stock-values, and that much has been absorbed by corporations. The bankruptcy of materialistic Capitalism has been more obvious in America than elsewhere, for nowhere, in modern times, has the banishment of moral considerations from business practice become more firmly established than in the States. And hence, the intense interest taken by Catholics in the endeavors, pursued now for over a twelvemonth, of the President, to supply by State-regulation the control over the pursuit of riches that is no longer exercised by the Christian conscience.

Mr. Roosevelt's speech at the beginning of his second year (March 5th) shows that his aim is to restore the economic equilibrium which Capitalist greed has so woefully upset, and *to prevent it ever occurring again*. He means to reform the Capitalist system which, under the blind impulse of avarice, has well-nigh destroyed itself. He reminds the Capitalist that 90 per cent of the American people live on wages and salaries, and are the main consumers of the country's production. Their needs, their interests, must take precedence of profits—"no one is opposed to sensible and reasonable profits . . . but as between profits first and humanity afterwards, and humanity first and profits afterwards, we have no room for hesitation." He will no longer tolerate what the law has too long winked at, "abuses of economic power—abuses against labor, abuses against employers, or abuses against the consuming public." His object is, not to bring back "prosperity," but such a reorganization as will be permanent "in that never again will we permit the social conditions which allowed vast sections of our population to exist in an un-American way, which allowed a maldistribution of wealth and power." The President, in other words, is determined to destroy that periodic cycle of slump and boom, which economists have regarded as a law of nature, but which merely indicates that the recurrent gluttonous excesses of Mammon are followed by recurrent fits of indigestion. "What we seek is balance in our economic system—balance between agriculture and industry, and balance between wage-earner, employer and consumer." And to achieve that equilibrium, he has put Mammon on a diet.

All this is in full harmony with Catholic ethics, which

traces every economic ill to injustice of one kind or another—usury, unfair wages, excessive prices, Stock Exchange gambling, cornering, and the like. But the Church would go further. Mr. Roosevelt seems content that 90 per cent of U. S. citizens should be property-less, dependent on wage or salary for the means of living. Now, without a wide diffusion of private ownership, personal liberty is always in jeopardy, at the mercy of malice or misfortune, and family life cannot reach its full development. Even if the President can bring his unruly herd of self-seeking individualists to recognize the paramount claims of the universal good as a check upon their own, the tendency to reassert themselves unduly will always remain. The real Christian remedy lies in the blending of the interests of Capital and Labor, which, if only greed would not force them apart into hostile camps, may be regarded as two aspects of the same entity. That was the view taken of industry in Catholic days: can it be revived in the immensely more complicated world of today? Is there any way of reconciling those integral parts of every nation which Mammon has contrived to set at variance, and thus removing a potent cause of strife and weakness? Russia, Italy, Germany, Austria, and finally, the Pope have put forth answers to that question.

Russia has done so by making the whole people the slaves of an armed oligarchy, which has seized control of all the means of industry, and exercises an unparalleled form of despotism. There is no light or leading to be found in the gospel according to Marx; the attempt to cast out one devil by a worse. Italy also has abrogated, in the interests of economic unity, many forms of personal freedom by the Law on Corporations, passed after seven years' debate, on January 18th. It is of great extent and complexity, but the upshot of it is that all Italian "producers" of whatever kind, are enrolled in their several State-recognized regional Trade Union Syndicates, and must so conduct their businesses that the unity and strength of the State are fostered and increased. S. Mussolini's ideals do indeed point to the permanent exile of Mammon. In his great speech of November 14th last year, when he foreshadowed the establishment, in place of the Chamber, of the National Council of Corporations, Il Duce pronounced the funeral oration of individualistic Capitalism, the typical figures of which were

Kreuger and Insull [Stavisky, of course, was still to come]. The object of the category corporations was the well-being of the people. "Italy must remain a people with a mixed economy and a strong agriculture which is the base of all . . . a small and modest industry, a bank which does not indulge in speculation [in the American crisis many of the banks *did*] a commerce which fulfils its proper duty of bringing merchandise rapidly to the consumer."

In Germany, again, those parts of the Nazi program which paved the way to its tolerance or acceptance by the people at large, were precisely those directed against Mammon—the "thralldom of interest" as it was called. Hitler called for the abolition of "the power of money, most ruthless of all powers, which holds absolute control and exercises a corrupting and destroying influence on State, nation, society, morals, drama, literature and other ethical matters, less easy to estimate." Here is a distinct challenge to those usurious practices which have corrupted the civilization built up by Christianity, to that selfish individualism that repudiates the claims of Christian brotherhood. We cannot yet say, so confused is the German scene, whether that challenge is being proceeded with and by what means, but its aim is morally right. Like President Roosevelt in America, Herr Hitler is trying to do by force of law what should be done—and, in a really Christian community, would be done—by conscientious obedience to God's commandments. Both are trying to coerce into paths of social justice men who for the most part, owing to their training and tradition, do not acknowledge that conscience has any say in the matter.

It is only when we turn to Austria, where a preliminary draft of a new Constitution may be in force by Easter or at latest on July 1st, that we find the beginning of a regime, which aims at being authoritative without being tyrannical, and to solve the economic abuses of Capitalism on lines laid down by the authorized exponent of Christian ethics. Austria is overwhelmingly Catholic, although, as is the case of Spain, hard economic conditions and the lack of effective Catholic social work have allowed many of the working classes to drift into Socialism. Accordingly, the social teaching of the Church may fairly and prudently be followed in framing a Constitution to replace the former discredited

political system, which had only served to keep the nation weak and divided. Let no one condemn Herr Dollfuss for rejecting it. If we, in this country, had had the experience of Parliamentary Government as it has functioned abroad—in Spain, in France, in Germany and in Austria—we, too, perhaps, would be glad to get rid of it. Democracy, civil and religious freedom, basic human claims, may possibly find just as fitting expression through other political forms. There are no reasons in the nature of things to justify industrial strife, since, apart from the interference of avarice, the interests of worker and employer should not conflict; and so, a common zeal for the welfare of the nation may well mitigate, for a time at least, ordinary political differences. Everything depends on the character and aims of the non-party Government which assumes power, with the acquiescence of the majority of the citizens. Anyhow, Herr Dollfuss, having before his eyes the un-Christian aspects both of Fascism and Nazi-ism, and with the clear social doctrine embodied in "Quadragesimo Anno" also in view, may be trusted not to sin against justice in the provisional Constitution which he is framing. "Austrians," [says *The Times* (March 15th) in an appreciative comment], "are not bidden to surrender themselves body and soul to a militant nationalist or racial creed, to deify a one-party State, to conform to an arbitrary human type, or to live their lives amid the blare and flourish of a military spirit." And the same journal goes on, not quite so understandingly (as its identification of religion with reaction shows)—

The corporative State would inevitably have a Roman Catholic bias—religion has been the backbone of resistance both to the Nazis and the Socialists—but that is by no means to say that social reaction would reign supreme. Those who wish to form their own estimate of the spiritual background cannot do better than study the Papal Encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno," published in 1931. In that pronouncement, which the Austrian Government hope to be the first to convert into practice, the Pope denounced both Socialism and plutocracy, called for a system of private ownership founded on justice and charity and praised [not without certain qualifications] the Italian corporative system.

And so we come to the Pope at last—the one power, as Head of the Church of Christ, who can effectually oppose Antichrist, masquerading for the moment as Mammon. What statesman of them all has denounced, as he has, *both*

Socialism and plutocracy, and put forward private ownership, the only alternative to wage-slavery, as the true basis of industrial reconstruction? *The Times* wisely suggests that "Quadragesimo Anno" should be studied—there are signs that President Roosevelt *has* done so—and who should study it more and make its teaching more familiar to themselves than the Pope's own children? In those powerful pages the prevalent usury, the concentration on material things, the excessive indulgence in worldly pleasures and the myriad forms of social injustice that are tolerated amongst us, are denounced with Apostolic vigor. Do we echo these denunciations as we should, in our lives, if not in our words? Or are we not rather, in our different degrees, ourselves the guilty objects of them? The American "Catholic League for Social Justice" has been mentioned more than once in these pages. Besides a pledge to attend Mass and the Sacraments regularly, all that it binds each member to is—"To inform myself on Catholic doctrine on Social Justice, to conform my life to its requirements, and to do everything in my power, in my home and religious life, in my social and business contacts, to promote its principles," a program which, after all, only expresses in other words what our duty as Catholics imposes upon us—the enlightened practice of justice and charity. Yet a prominent worker for Social Justice in the States writes of "an incomprehensible apathy on the part of the layman in this country, his lack of faith in God in his temporal concerns," and repeats that "the lack of interest in Catholic Action by the men is appalling." America is a continent, and its 20 million Catholics are swallowed up by the 100 million non-Catholics around them. Yet how is Mammon there to be overcome without their help? As for our own case here, our statesmen, alas! have not the vision of the American President. None of them has denounced "the maldistribution of wealth," or sought to break the excessive power of moneyed interests. All seem to acquiesce blindly in an unreformed, unregulated Capitalism, with its necessary consequence of endless industrial strife and the vast misery of unemployment. We Catholics, then, have a harder task than our American brethren to restore Christian principles to industry. How many of us have realized what is the Pope's diagnosis of modern economic conditions, or could intelligently set forth his remedies?

The Liturgical Art Movement

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THE frontiers of America, we are told by historians, passed out of existence in 1890, and thus in broad outlines the settlement of our country was accomplished; with them went the bold frontiersman—the pioneer of the forests and plains—whose intrepid figure completes the picture in which the heroic effort to build our empire had been the impelling force.

But, if this pioneer husbandman was to disappear from the scene, the valiant pioneer of the Church was still to carry on. It was he who had been the first to tread the vast wilderness, to wander indefinitely in the deep forests, or to glide, alone with his savage companions, down the great rivers and over the vast lakes, sleeping and living in the Indian tepees, abandoning himself in an almost unparalleled act of self-sacrifice and saintly devotion to the cause of his mission.

If these first efforts of the early Jesuits came to naught else, they at least set an example for the great host of others of their calling who were to follow them. No longer so picturesque nor so romantic, no longer completing heroic chapters in the great epic which is so familiar to us, they have borne, however, the burden of their labor with a fortitude and a sense of Christian self-denial, so deeply associated with the long annals of the Church.

Even to the present day these pioneers are yet with us; the parish priest of the small town whom we have seen laboring for half a century more or less at his daily task, is occasionally beset with some of the same problems his predecessors had to face, because America still has fringes which are raw, uncompromising and ugly. For generations we have been accustomed to turn our eyes away from these uglinesses, accepting them as the inevitable accompaniment of a pioneer existence, and not realizing what an anomaly they have been in this land of rapid evolution.

Those of us who have lived through the last sixty or seventy years and who in consequence of æsthetic predilections, have felt the lack of proper appreciation of liturgical and artistic standards in the Church, and who have suffered from their surroundings may wisely recall the difficulties which our missionary priests have had to contend with in establishing the Church in our frontier country. Moreover an important factor in retarding the development of æsthetic taste has been that many of the priesthood were drawn from the poorest and humblest of our people, who lacking a more cultivated education had not had the opportunity to appreciate what the Church has to offer artistically.

But that time has passed. In the richer development of our civilization there is no longer any excuse for intelligent Catholics to disregard the fact that within the Church there is the greatest wellspring of beauty and artistic inspiration awaiting those who are but willing to drink from it.

To show this to our people, to unfold to them all the great tradition to which they are heirs has been the object in organizing the Liturgical Arts Society. The sympathetic encouragement which the movement has already received is an evidence of the wisdom of the undertaking at this time. Whether thirty years ago a like effort would have had the same response is questionable, though some unnecessary ignominies might have been spared us. Yet at that time there was erected in New England a Catholic Church, which architecturally, artistically and practically was complete in every liturgical sense. From the parish, in which there could not be counted a single rich parishioner, the funds for the purpose were contributed, as it were, dollar by dollar; and before the death of the saintly pastor who undertook the enterprise, every detail for the embellishment of the church, and every necessity for the proper enactment of the liturgy according to the rubric had been installed and, I believe, paid for; the whole not only a truly artistic symbol of the glorification of the Faith, but a monument to a faithful disciple whose vision and good taste had enabled him to carry to completion a labor which in its own way could hardly be equaled in his day.

The question arose then as it does today, why if he could accomplish so much with such limited means, why not others? Why in church after church are we confronted with

the incongruities which have become so especially associated with the modern Catholic Church, and which in their ugliness and inappropriateness question the integrity of their devotional purpose?

When we realize what the art of the Church offers, and what it has offered and given to the world, it is difficult to understand how we should be willing to submit ourselves to such misinterpretations of the liturgy, which in its divine expression transcends everything but the highest form of beauty. Were it a matter merely of artistic taste and preference, the question might more often be debatable, but the continued disregard for the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and for liturgical tradition draws constant attention to itself in its lack of appreciation of the virtue that lies in those established standards.

We must sit before an altar which, besides being an artistic anomaly answers few if any of the liturgical demands, while around it, encumbering most of the sanctuary in opposition to distinct rubrical commands, are grouped an array sickly polychromed statues, recalling in their meaninglessness a lot of unfortunate misplaced wax-works. If we are able to shut our eyes to all these incongruities, and try to concentrate our attention on the prayers of the Mass, we are assailed by a choir which has no intention of leaving us to the profit and enjoyment of the divine sacrifice in which we are partakers; but insists upon drawing attention to itself by its violence of expression and its loud clamorous musical outbursts. At the solemn moment of the Consecration, we must listen to hear if Miss X. will succeed in reaching her high C, as she romps forward with jazz-like speed to win out before the officiating priest has completed his deeply sacred prayer, entirely oblivious of the significance of the scene being enacted before her, oblivious of the inappropriateness of her crude efforts and in complete disregard for the Pontifical injunctions forbidding such a demonstration.

This is not a pretty picture nor is it altogether an unusual one today, when we are still living as in the past in patient hope of a speedy awakening to the horror of these common abuses. Though these conditions may appear discouraging they are fortunately not universal; on the contrary there has prevailed throughout the country now for a number of years a growing concern regarding liturgical matters, in conse-

quence of which we have witnessed an increasing number of churches and other ecclesiastical buildings which not only do great credit to the Church in general, but reflect honor both upon the clergy, who have built them and upon the distinguished architects who have designed them. In the majority of cases the liturgical requirements have been adhered to throughout, so that their ensemble may be regarded as a decided step forward.

Under the impulse of this development and with a profound confidence of the need for furthering it, the Liturgical Arts Society initiated by a group of architects, artists and clergymen was founded, its object being "to increase the interest of its members in the spiritual value of the liturgical arts; and to coördinate the efforts of those concerned in their development." The Society in devoting itself to liturgical art as distinct from secular Christian art, "aims to promote the study and practice of the arts and crafts relating directly to the worship of the Catholic Church."¹

As a means of carrying out this program the Society conceived the establishment of an organized medium of artistic education in the publication of the quarterly magazine, *Liturgical Arts*. Through its pages it is proposed to make available to its readers examples of great works of the past with educational study of their significance and implications, together with those modern accomplishments worthy of consideration. Moreover, the publication seeks to serve as a general clearing-house for information regarding artistic liturgical matters, by which both laity and clergy alike may have the means of discussing in open forum the demands and exigencies of definite questions concerning their own artistic problems.

The success of the undertaking has depended upon the sympathy and the support of the hierarchy, and happily to its credit, it has received this whole-heartedly, so that we

¹The first exhibit of church art accessories sponsored by the Liturgical Arts Society was opened on May 15th at the Architectural League Building, New York City. The purpose of the exhibition, which will remain open until June 15th, is to illustrate how architectural and artistic talent can be used to beautify small churches at modest cost. The exhibition room has been transformed to suggest the interior of a small church, with stained glass windows, sanctuary and altar. Among the objects shown are triptychs in hand-tooled frames, carved hardwood and granite altars, hand-wrought iron and brass work, hand-carved wood seats, sanctuary lamps, fonts for holy water, especially designed and woven altar cloths and hangings, and other examples of contemporary liturgical arts and crafts.

may hope to see through its guidance and instruction the universal adoption of worthier standards throughout the United States.

The gauge of artistic standards, however, is a vague one. As such, they do not in reality exist. When we think of standards, we think in terms of our own tastes, of our prejudices, of our likes and dislikes, of styles, schools, fashions, movements or technique, the common denominator of which may differ as much in our individual preferences as any one of these component parts. We have only to witness the divergent points of view concerning contemporary artistic work to realize how difficult it may become to assure ourselves of the value of a given norm which may serve us as true guide. There are many, for instance, who will assure us that "Gothic" styles may be accepted as a safe torch to follow through this labyrinth of discussion and controversy, and yet how sure can we be that our taste in that particular direction may not be challenged at any moment by the insistence upon other fashions? One hundred years ago the great battle against those "medieval horrors" was still raging, and it was a serious one, inasmuch as it not only threatened the very existence of some of the most precious artistic creations that the hand of man had produced, but it was even the means of much irreparable damage to them.

In the spirit of the old Mother Church we may put our trust. As the companion of art she encouraged the artist to express himself in terms of beauty, and as the Mystical Body of Christ she became the symbol of the greatest beauty, the true beauty which is of heavenly origin. Through it the artist's soul was illumined and he was impelled by an inevitable impulse to embody his vision in outward form. The work of art thus created became an expression of the Divine Spirit, "source and origin of all beings whose affirmation in every form is the deep reality of our mortal life."

From this conception of beauty, the Church was never separated, she was one with it. Hence her appeal to the artist was direct, impelling and authoritative. Any departure from it is a denial of his mission and a degradation of a God-given opportunity to serve her. With the inspiration he receives as a Catholic he is offered the truest standards he can find and he must in faith follow them.

The dominant note in the Catholic Church is that of

peace. Our Lord's coming on earth was heralded with a message of peace; and His last words to His disciples were a legacy of peace. So every Catholic church should be an embodiment of this symbol of the Faith. The Mass is redolent with it, hence the liturgy which may not be dissociated from the Mass demands its presence everywhere. Peace implies calm, quiet, which in artistic terms means symmetry of line and form, harmony of colors and a subduing of details to one harmonious whole. To obtain this the Church speaks to us through symbolism. Through it alone is expressed her conception of peace and beauty. By symbolism is implied that for every human thought, that for every human emotion a plastic decorative equivalent exists with corresponding beauty, so that instead of appealing to our emotions, purely by means of the subjects represented, it is the quality of the work which is intended to move us.

We have seen how in modern times this great tradition has been neglected, evidenced by the deplorable conditions so familiar today; so that it is apparent that as we descend lower and lower from this ideal, in exact proportion do we lay open the possibility of accepting mediocrity and vulgarity in its place. Moreover in consequence of this neglect the traditional ordinance, which controlled the whole of liturgical art has disappeared, and we have transplanting it, individualistic treatments entirely in variance with the early inspired unity which the liturgy demands. This ordinance, inspired by the universality of the Church, strives to bring all the component parts of her decorations and her music into one coördinated whole, so that they may be embodied in the celebration of the Mass. This traditional plan has been so woefully disregarded that in the opinion of some intellectual Catholics, the disrupting result is even looked upon as the work of the devil.

We may quote here from Lamennais: "Beauty, as expressed by man in a work of art is necessarily related to God.

"Therefore, this being true, the contrary is equally true, and ugliness is necessarily related to the devil; it is his reflection, as Beauty is the reflection of God."

Be it the work of the devil or not, this constant disregard for liturgical usages has had much to do with turning many

away from the practices of their Faith and has stood as a barrier for those who were turning their minds to the Church. Since the spirit of the Church has shown us that art is one of the most beautiful manifestations of the human mind, it is difficult to understand how Catholics can so often allow the body of Our Lord to remain in churches abandoned to ugliness and vulgarity, yet these artistic monstrosities have become the *sine qua non* of a Catholic church in this country.

Contrariwise it is of significance to note here how paradoxical has been the example set us by the Protestants in this country. Though the Reformation had condemned all artistic expression in its churches, and though this regulation is still observed to some extent, the need of beauty was so imperative that many years ago they overcame that prejudice and in consequence we have beheld for generations in their cathedrals, churches and chapels the finest examples of religious and liturgical art in America. So when all real conception of liturgical art was still dormant in the Catholic mind, the Protestants had undertaken to embellish their temples through the means of the highest artistic talent obtainable, and have thus left a lasting contribution to posterity.

One example in particular is notable. Sixty years ago the interior of a Congregational church in Newport, R. I., was decorated by a distinguished Catholic artist; one of the first two or three churches to be similarly treated in this country. Naturally all liturgical expression had to be omitted, yet the work by its pure beauty has a truly religious significance and stands as a triumphant proof of what cultivated and artistic taste may produce and what reliance may be placed upon an artist whose high ideals will never permit him to stoop to the mediocrity and vulgarity of the commercial art firm. True artist, he stands fearlessly as the arch-enemy of this form of commercialism, which has laid its heavy hand upon the Church for years, blighting it with an insidious ugliness. Through it the very soul of liturgical art has become diseased, and the wellspring of beauty which the Church has taught us to adhere to has been dried up.

In the presence of such standards we are so far removed from the significance of great work that the vision of famous masterpieces seem to belong to another faith, another se-

quence of ideas and aspirations. The image of the great Madonna of Torcello appears before us.

The inaccessibility of this famous mosaic painting in the Cathedral of Torcello on the island of Torcello unfortunately makes it comparatively unfamiliar to the ordinary student or tourist. Designed and executed in the twelfth century by an unknown artist, it owes its renown in a great measure to its unique place in the history of religious art.

The church in which it is placed was erected in 641 and is celebrated as a fine example of Lombard architecture; the interior contains besides this mosaic and others of the same period a number of well-known works of art of exceptional quality, so that a pilgrim to this artistic shrine is sure to be rewarded for the effort.

In recalling the Torcello Madonna we may question ourselves whether it can indeed have been conceived from the same artistic beliefs which have created the sickly horrors we were contemplating a moment ago; and whether the same divine spirit that ennobled her creator has touched the perpetrator of those other anomalies? The comparison is the answer. One is an aspiration, the other is a disgrace. One is derived from a deeply artistic conviction while the other has its origin in the heart of sordid purposes. Here are indeed standards which the teachings of the Church have allowed us to comprehend, and from these as a point of departure, we may find our way.

In contrast to the Torcello masterpiece we have the commercialized pink-faced Virgins. In their simpering realism and tawdry color and forms there has been no intention whatever of exemplifying any traditional conception, but merely to tickle the sensual taste of the unsuspecting faithful. Here and elsewhere in like productions we seek in vain for any religious quality of expression, and in its crass attempt at realism we need not hope to discover any symbolism or monumental simplicity.

In the Torcello Madonna on the other hand, we have symbolism exalted to a high degree. Whether the artist himself conceived the painting in these terms one can but surmise, but that he did create it from a God-given inspiration with means which are apparent, we may be sure.

The great figure of the Virgin, colossal in height, stands holding the Christ Child in her arms—both look out to-

ward one—the somber rich tones of the draperies are in strong contrast to the golden surfaces of the background, which occupies the whole of the apse of the church on which none but these two figures are presented. In standing before this group, the power of symbolic expression strikes one as a salient feature of the work—its beauty of color and the harmony of its lines seem almost secondary to its significance as a symbol, as an abstract ideal of the Eternal Mother, the generic Mother.

The means employed are crude, the drawing and the form rather archaic, the modeling unrealized and conventionalized, but it still remains a consummate masterpiece, one of the greatest of all times.

Never again do we see the Mother of Christ quite in this abstract form, so removed from us and yet so appealing in her calm and mysterious beauty.

The pale face gazing out with its dark eyes follows one with a strange impersonality and sympathy; and in the whole figure are exemplified the highest form of sacred painting in which a great mastery of medium is dedicated to a deeply religious theme.

It is probable that artistry has unconsciously produced the effect of divinity—an effect which shows moreover the influence of an Oriental conception of divine personages declaring itself. These conceptions, based at first on severe canons, broke away eventually from orthodox lines, where the artistic genius was greater than the binding force of the established restrictions.

And so the Torcello Madonna in like manner, though conventional in general form, expresses a freedom from restraint in its original spontaneity and vigor; and is one of the very few instances extant where the implication of divinity is successfully represented in the whole nineteen hundred years of Christian painting.

May we hope to attain to any such heights through our own civilization? It is difficult to look into the future, especially with standards so at variance with those of the great past. Though possessing definite artistic virtues, modernistic art can hardly be recommended as a probable field in which to seek our goal. Its awkward and ugly forms are derived through a highly individualistic approach, and consequently are entirely at variance with liturgical tradition,

which, as we have seen, demands a concentric ideal, a sacrifice of self, a conforming to a unity of expression and ideas.

By its eccentricities the main purpose of the liturgy is lost sight of, and we have in its place independent units tending to destroy any hope of a coördinate whole.

No art which is *voulu* can express the liturgy, and no art that asserts itself irrespectively of liturgical canons can speak to us as representing a truly religious conviction. Religious art must spring from within the Church, not from without; otherwise it falls back into the same category of conditions such as we are now aiming to abolish. Let us hope that through the new liturgical movement light may come, and that the art of the Church in this country may be raised to an ideal that will reflect in its fulness the glory of God.